

Barometer/Spectrum

Taking a Stand on Controversial Issues

In this modified debate activity, students have a chance to literally take a stand on one side of an issue or another.

Students will:

- Develop their discussion skills, particularly their ability to listen to one another
- Find a safe place to disagree respectfully and learn from one another
- Complicate their own thinking and explore the complexities of the issues raised
- Formulate and articulate their opinion on a particular issue
- Develop critical thinking skills

Procedure: Use tape or a painted line on the floor long enough for all students to find a place on the line. This line represents the barometer of “feelings” on an issue. Those students to the left are against/con and those to the right are for/pro. The further they stand toward the ends, the stronger their feelings about their positions on the issue or topic. The middle is unsure or neutral.

A debate or discussion should follow with people defending their positions on the barometer.

Also referred to in the literature as “Spectrum”